



The Phoenix Family Readiness Group Newsletter
1st Special Troops Battalion, 4th Infantry Division (M)
Operation Iraqi Freedom 05-07



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Another two weeks have past and we are nearing the halfway point of the deployment. As of the end of May, almost half of our Soldiers have departed on leave and the other half is excited to re-unite with loved ones shortly. In this issue, we will hear from the JNN Platoon, the Brigade PSD, the IEW Maintenance Section, Raven 6 and our highly motivated Re-enlistment Section. We thank you again for all your love and support.

PHOENIX PROJECTS

As the Brigade Project Managers, we are responsible for tracking not only the construction of projects but also the progression of project packets. The processing of project packets encompasses the initial idea for the project, the design and bids from local contractors, a review by our Iraqi engineers Bill and Hans, final approval and funding, and many small pieces of the puzzle that the Phoenix Soldiers monitor on a daily and sometimes hourly basis. The process can often be frustrating as we work with the local Iraqi governance and contractors, but we all agree the hard work is worthwhile for the privilege of being a part of the regeneration of Iraq's infrastructure. In the next two weeks we look forward to the grand opening of yet another local Qada building and the completion of many village roads.

Projects PAO Manager – 2LT Jordan Maxcey



Above: MAJ Patrick Kent, our new S3, poses with a student at the Attia School Grand-Opening.

2ND JOINT NETWORK NODE PLATOON

As 1st Brigade strives to build a capable Iraqi Army, a continual effort is maintained to provide adequate communications. Similar to the American Army, the Iraqi Army must have the ability to effectively communicate between its units. Camp Taji is home to the Iraqi 9th Division. Its command and control capability relies on support from U.S. Army Signal Soldiers.

Bravo Company's 2nd Joint Network Node platoon is responsible for providing communications and technical support for the entire Iraqi 9th Division. This includes both 1-9 and 2-9 MITT Brigade TOCs. The Joint Network Node platoon provides the same Secure and Non Secure communications as provided to our own American forces. This

allows Iraqi and American forces to effectively execute cooperative missions. The JNN platoon is lead by 2LT Carter, the Network Management Technician, and SFC Gonzales, the Telecommunications Operation Chief. The JNN consists of 2 sections, a KU Band Satellite Section and a JNN Shelter Section.



Above: SPC Carson examining the spectrum analyzer on board the KU Band Satellite ensuring maximum performance.

The KU Band Satellite Section consists of 3 Satellite Communications System Operators, SPC Logan, SPC Thompson, and SPC Carson. The KU Band satellite provides both Frequency Division Multiple Access (FDMA) and Time Division Multiple Access (TDMA) communication links. The main mission of the KU Band subsystem is to send and receive data via satellite. It allows for communication outside the local JNN. The KU Band Satellite section of the JNN platoon is responsible for the set-up, trouble shooting, and maintenance of the KU subsystem and its components.

The Joint Network Node section has 3 Network Switching System Operators, SGT Bell, SPC Talton, and SPC Bock. The JNN is comprised of multiple media converters, routers, and switches. The JNN provides routing of information for its users. The JNN operators are considered experts on programming, troubleshooting, and configuring commercial CISCO routers and

switches. These operators are responsible for managing and troubleshooting communications links between 9th Division Headquarters, its Brigade headquarters, and 1st Brigade.

The JNN platoon is in operation 24 hours a day, seven days a week, continually providing ready and reliable communications and technical support.

JNN Platoon Leader – 2LT Ronald Carter

PHOENIX RE-ENLISTMENTS

The Army has a saying, “We enlist soldiers; we re-enlist families.” The 1ST STB Reenlistment program has been very active since deploying to Iraq, participating in a total of 65 reenlistments to date. We are well above our re-enlistment goal for the year, as two out of every three soldiers eligible to re-enlist do.



Above: SPC Amanda Velilla poses with CPT Clayton Bell after her re-enlistment.

“Show me the Money” is our adage as we work hard to help the Phoenix Soldiers take advantage of the re-enlistment opportunities while deployed in Iraq. The Army also does its best effort to encourage re-enlistment by offering bonuses ranging from \$5,000 to \$40,000 depending on MOS skill and years of reenlistment. Our most recent re-enlistments were PFC Benjamin Utley, HHC, SPC Ryan Bock, Bravo CO, SPC Amanda Velilla, A CO, and SSG Roland Stamm, HHD. SSG Stamm

re-enlisted with a very distinguished guest...Chief of Staff of the Army General Schoomaker. I leave you with a quote from the Retention Handbook, "Good Leaders Retain Good Soldiers." This is the peoples' Re-enlistment NCO saying that's all for now. Until next time...NO SLACK!!!

Re-enlistment NCO – SGT Brandon Elam



Above: SSG Roland Stamm shakes hands with General Schoomaker, Chief-of-Staff of the Army, after his re-enlistment.

IEW MAINTENANCE

The Military Intelligence (MI) Systems Maintainer/Integrator CMF 33 (33W) mission statement is described as: Perform and supervise maintenance, integration, and electronics monitoring on antennas, computers and peripherals, networks, common data links, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) systems, Internet Protocol (IP) Network Architecture, and complex computer-controlled MI and national crypto logic systems and missions to include all intelligence disciplines for collection, processing, and dissemination at all echelons; conducts computer network operations, installs and reconfigures computer hardware and software, and authors web applications.

Now, you may be scratching your head, but in layman's terms this means: If it deals with intelligence or electronics, and it is down, disconnected, broken, or just not quite

running correctly, then we will fix it. It is our responsibility to ensure that all MI systems are operating at their full capabilities so that they can complete their missions.

When we first arrived in Iraq our main responsibility was to get the Brigade SCIF (Sensitive Compartmented Information Facility) communications up and running. This is the "intelligence hub" where all classified information is processed, analyzed, and sent throughout the Brigade. We engineered and installed the internal network for the entire building. We simultaneously performed the same operation for the building occupied by A Co and HHC. After completing these setup tasks we fell into our more regular routine of scheduling and performing regular preventative maintenance and troubleshooting equipment problems. On standby 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, we answer trouble calls immediately when systems experience problems to minimize the system down time. This is essential to our intelligence efforts. If the systems do not work, then the lives of the ground troops may be on the line. Although these are our primary goals for the unit, we also regularly perform other various soldier tasks such as convoy support operations, guard shifts, company supply procedures, and assisting with the local Iraqi internet service provider.



Above: SGT Dylan McManus and SPC Mirabel Fuentes perform IEW maintenance.

As the most technical MOS in the Army, our job offers us a lot of diversity to

keep us on our toes, and completing our mission is always very rewarding. Every 33 will tell you that it is well worth the year we spend in training.

-SGT Dylan McManus

TO DARE IS TO DO...BY SERGEANT MAJOR SEAMAN

“To Dare Is To Do”...that is the motto of the 1st Special Troops Battalion. I think it represents us well. The Soldiers of this battalion have dared to do many things since its activation, and have done them very well. That is a tribute to the many good leaders within this organization and a testament to the character and discipline of the Soldiers. This unit has met every challenge head on. Mottos and creeds are just simple words but in some organizations they mean more. A motto used by a unit in the Army characterizes that unit, sometimes fitting and sometimes not quite fitting the unit. I think ours fits.

In the short span of this unit’s life, our Battalion Commander, LTC John W. Cross, has dared to do. He has formed a team, leads by example in all aspects of duty and performance, and demonstrates physical courage by traveling all over the battlefield discussing projects with the local Iraqi councils, Sheiks, and Iraqi government officials. LTC Cross checks on the progress of various projects, troubleshoots any problems he can, and coordinates with U.S. Armed Forces agencies involved in the rebuilding of Iraqi Infrastructure. LTC Cross has dared to do.



Above: LTC John Cross and SSG Jonathan Williams salute after SSG Williams received his CAB (Combat Action Badge).



Above: SSG Orlando Ochoa and his EOD Escort Team.

SSG Orlando Ochoa has dared to do. He is the senior NCO squad leader in charge of leading our Soldiers on the EOD (Explosive Ordinance Disposal) Escort mission. He has built a great team of Soldiers. SSG Ochoa served in OIF I and is a seasoned combat veteran. However, if you met him in a restaurant or elsewhere you would never know it. He is energetic, enthusiastic, caring, and works very hard to take care of our Soldiers. When it comes down to business, he is deadly serious, cool under pressure, and a solid combat leader. He is a great American.

SSG Jonathan Williams has dared to do. SSG Williams is the Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge of our Ironclaw Team. He is a seasoned veteran of OIF I, a combat engineer, and a very experienced combat leader. SSG Williams has also formed a great

team of Soldiers from across the Battalion. He takes care of them, ensures they are trained and prepared, and most importantly safe.

SFC Nathan Quinn has dared to do. He is the Military Police Platoon Sergeant. SFC Quinn is responsible for the care and welfare of the MP Platoon. He also is an OIF I veteran and a seasoned combat leader. SFC Quinn knows MP business, is disciplined and tactically proficient, and is a great combat leader to be relied upon no matter what the mission.

SSG Tawan Williamson is the NCOIC for the Battalion (PSD) personal security detachment section. He has dared to do. A committed leader and a loyal and trustworthy soldier, SSG Williamson has quickly formed a team, trained his soldiers, and led many successful combat patrols. He is a great American and serves the Army well.



Above: SSG Tawan Williamson leading the PSD at a school project.

These are just a few of the many great leaders that live, work, and perform their duties within the 1st Special Troops Battalion. I just wanted to share a little about them from my point of view. I am glad to have them in the Battalion and rely on them to get the job done. To Dare Is To Do...Phoenix!

Phoenix 7- CSM Larry E Seaman

A WORD FROM RAVEN 6

Yes! As I began writing this letter, I realized that we are halfway through with our tour. By

the time you all receive this we will have less than six months to go. I know all of the Soldiers are missing home, but I am surprised every time I see one come back from leave excited to see all their friends again. They arrive back from R&R refreshed, raring to go, and about as excited to see their friends as they were to see their families when they left three weeks prior.

It's a strange relationship we have built, as brothers bound by war. We spend every hour of every day around each other, we eat together, sleep near one another, and most important of all, we risk our lives defending the freedom most people take for granted together. It's a strange relationship because you think we would get tired of seeing each other day in and day out. And in fact that does happen on occasion. There have been many times when I look across the mess hall table at my battle buddy, 1SG Pedraza, and can't think of anything to say. It seems like we have said all there is to say. We have discussed life, Soldiers, our families, and our aspirations. When we go outside the wire and have a close call, we talk about that too. But sometimes, there is nothing more to talk about so we just sit and eat.

I haven't gone on leave yet, but I am looking forward to the day; only a month and a half and counting. But then again, I wonder, will I miss my Army family while I am at home...I think I will.



Above: CPT Lou Castillo poses with an Iraqi Army Officer after recent training.

So what is the point of my letter this month, you might ask. Well, the point is that we are all getting on fine. The operational tempo (pace of the missions), waxes and wanes, but the Soldiers seem to thrive on the adversity. In fact, it is the adversity that has brought us together as a unit. I thank all the family members for the great support that you provided our Soldiers while we have been deployed. Your efforts and love are what makes everything bearable. And just think...half way done!

Ravens...Live with Honor.

Raven Commander - CPT Lou Castillo

“TRUNK MONKEYS” – BRIGADE PSD

Most days when you walk past the brigade headquarters, you'll see a group of Soldiers in full kit conducting patrol briefs and pre-combat checks. The personnel security detachment for the brigade command group is nothing if not prepared. This Praetorian Guard, ably led by SFC Bullock, conducts security for the Brigade Commander, Brigade Command Sergeant Major, Executive Officer, Operations Officer, and Deputy Brigade Commander. They also occasionally secure convoys with visiting dignitaries and VIPs.



Above: The “Trunk Monkeys” in Baghdad.

The PSD is divided into three squads. First squad, led by SSG Smith, normally secures

the Brigade Commander. Second squad, SSG Howell's squad, secures the Command Sergeant Major. Third squad, SSG Parker's squad, secures the Brigade's other command group personnel. This versatile third squad also secures the First Sergeant and I when we travel, and guards the Brigade's forward command post when it deploys off the base camp. These squads incorporate the command drivers for the brigade command group, so the Soldiers who convoy together train together. They are outfitted with the very best equipment I have to offer, from weapons to communications gear.

Selection for the PSD is highly selective. Composed almost entirely of infantrymen and scouts, the best of the brigade is represented. Each member was hand-picked by the Brigade Command Sergeant Major and extensively trained under the watchful eyes of SFC Bullock. Non-performance means a transfer to another unit. Consequently, each member is highly motivated and confident. The PSD, affectionately known as the "Trunk Monkeys" are always ready to roll at the push of a button.

Renegades Commander – CPT Ed Cox



To Dare Is To Do

Larry A. Seaman
Command Sergeant Major
U.S. Army

John W. Cross
LTC, EN
Commanding